

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Please cancel Claims 4, 5, 15-21, 25, 26 and 36.

The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

**Claim Listing:**

1. (Original) A method for modulating the activity of a growth factor in a sample, which contains an activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin, comprising (a) contacting the sample with a fatty acid in an amount sufficient to inhibit the formation of a complex between the growth factor and the activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin, wherein (b) the fatty acid binds to the activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the fatty acid has a carbon chain length of at least 14.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the fatty acid is a saturated fatty acid.
- 4-5. (Canceled)
6. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the fatty acid is an unsaturated fatty acid.
7. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein the fatty acid is selected from the group consisting of arachidonic acid, oleic acid,  $\gamma$ -linolenic acid, linoleic acid, palmitoleic acid and linolenic acid.
8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein the fatty acid is arachidonic acid.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the growth factor is selected from the group consisting of platelet-derived growth factor-AA, platelet-derived growth factor-BB, vascular endothelial cell growth factor, fibroblast growth factors, interleukins, growth hormone, insulin, insulin-like growth factor-1, insulin-like growth factor-2, nerve growth factor, neurotrophins and TGF- $\beta$ .

10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein the growth factor is TGF- $\beta$ .
11. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the TGF- $\beta$  is selected from the group consisting of TGF- $\beta$ 1, TGF- $\beta$ 2 and TGF- $\beta$ 3.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the TGF- $\beta$  is TGF- $\beta$ 1.
13. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the sample is a tissue or plasma.
14. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein the tissue or plasma is in an animal.
- 15-21. (Canceled)
22. (Original) A method for modulating the activity of a growth factor in a sample, which contains an  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-growth factor complex, comprising (a) contacting the sample with a fatty acid in an amount sufficient to promote the dissociation of the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-growth factor complex, wherein (b) the fatty acid binds to the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin portion of the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-growth factor complex and (c) the growth factor dissociates from  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin.
23. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the fatty acid has a carbon chain length of at least 14.
24. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the fatty acid is a saturated fatty acid.
- 25-26. (Canceled)
27. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the fatty acid is an unsaturated fatty acid.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein the fatty acid is selected from the group consisting of arachidonic acid, oleic acid,  $\gamma$ -linolenic acid, linoleic acid, palmitoleic acid and linolenic acid.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28 wherein the fatty acid is arachidonic acid.

30. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the growth factor is selected from the group consisting of platelet-derived growth factor-AA, platelet-derived growth factor-BB, vascular endothelial cell growth factor, fibroblast growth factors, interleukins, growth hormone, insulin, insulin-like growth factor-1, insulin-like growth factor-2, nerve growth factor, neurotrophins and TGF- $\beta$ .

31. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein the growth factor is TGF- $\beta$ .

32. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the TGF- $\beta$  is selected from the group consisting of TGF- $\beta$ 1, TGF- $\beta$ 2 and TGF- $\beta$ 3.

33. (Original) The method of claim 32 wherein the TGF- $\beta$  is TGF- $\beta$ 1.

34. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the sample is a tissue or plasma.

35. (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein the tissue or plasma is in an animal.

36. (Canceled)

37. (Original) A method of blocking the inhibitory effects of activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin on TGF- $\beta$  activity or reversing the inhibitory effects of activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin on TGF- $\beta$  activity comprising (a) contacting a sample, which comprises an activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin or an  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-TGF- $\beta$  complex, with a fatty acid in an amount sufficient to (i) inhibit the formation of a complex between the TGF- $\beta$  and the activated

$\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin or (ii) promote the dissociation of the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-TGF-  $\beta$  complex, wherein (b) the fatty acid binds to the activated  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin or the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin portion of the  $\alpha$ 2-macroglobulin-TGF-  $\beta$  complex.